

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

THE EFFICACY OF FACEBOOK AS A TOOL IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

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Abstract

June 15, 2011 marked the date of the Vancouver riots that followed the Canucks loss of the Stanley Cup final. Social media as a form of communication between the public and police was a distinguishing feature during the 2011 riots, and is compared to the context of a similar Vancouver riot occurring in 1994. Through the review of literature on the criminal justice system, crowdsourcing, social media as a tool in policing, surveillance, language on Facebook and Facebook as a communication tool I explore the practice of communication as it unfolds on the Facebook group, “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” and examine the efficacy of this communication tool. The Facebook comments underneath the uploaded images are evaluated through a content analysis. Five Facebook images and their associated comment threads are collected in chronological order for the sample based on the outlined criteria of: 25-40 comments, a non-manipulated image, and being published in either the Globe and Mail or the National Post online news source. Erving Goffman’s theoretical orientation of frame analysis is applied to understanding the development of the Facebook comments; more specifically his concept of the social primary framework is directly related to the intended purpose outlined by the Facebook group. The purpose of “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” is to identify rioters through the public’s contribution of images and Facebook comments. Research findings suggest that the intended purpose of the Facebook group is achieved, as there is a significant emergence of the frames identification and crowdsourcing; therefore, Facebook is deemed a helpful tool in police investigation.

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Introduction

Two years ago riots caused a public disturbance in the streets of downtown Vancouver and captured media attention nationally and around the world. The Vancouver Riots occurred June 15 2011 following the Vancouver Canucks' loss of the Stanley Cup Final. Social media as a form of communication between the public and police was a distinguishing feature in the 2011 riots. I am interested in the communication on the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos", which occurred as a result of the riot. The group was created by member of the public Robert Gorcak and had over 70,000 likes one day following the riot (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). My MRP will explore the concept of crowdsourcing and its role in content contribution to the comments posted underneath uploaded images in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos". The focus of analysis is on the dialogue and language use exchanged in the comments. The goal of my MRP is to have a better understanding of the efficacy of Facebook as a criminal investigation tool.

Historical Context: Vancouver Hockey Riots

The 2011 public disturbance was not the first hockey riot for the city of Vancouver. In 1994 a similar riot occurred following the Canucks' loss of another Stanley Cup final. This event is important for placing the 2011 riot in context, as the major difference between these two events was the use of integrated communication platforms. In 2011 Facebook acted as primary crowdsourcing tools to identify riot participants. Comparatively in 1994 citizens identified riot participants through the use of kiosks set up in public places. Kiosks played media footage for the public to identify rioters (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). The public was encouraged to visit a kiosk, view the

images and video footage and following this, enter the name, address and workplace of any individuals they recognized. Police utilized this method to aid investigation. The police collected concrete evidence of the event and defined situational features through media footage (Schneider & Trottier, 2012).

In 1994 police requested that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation provide investigators with raw riot media footage from local television stations and newspapers; the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation initially refused the request. The police received a court order and collected media footage from CBC, BCTV, CKVU, the Vancouver Sun and the Province (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). This was the information used to communicate with the public in order to identifying suspected rioters. In the 2011 riot social media as a tool of communication was the most distinguishing feature. Mobile phone technology allowed the 2011 riot to be easily recorded and communicated through text, photo and video. Recorded content circulated in online communities and allowed for a high amount of public accessibility, which produced increased viewing, commenting and sharing of information (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). The difference in communication technology between 1994 and 2011 is impressive. Kiosks in 1994 encouraged the public audience to ‘come forward’ with information; however, in comparison social media in 2011 promotes a greater sense of user involvement (Trottier, 2012b). The use of social media in the 2011 Vancouver riots indicated major advancements within communication platforms as a tool in criminal investigations.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be guiding my MRP are:

1. To what extent is ‘criminal justice discourse’ present in the comments of the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?
2. What ‘frames’ have been formed in “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” through the application of Goffman’s theory of frame analysis?
3. To what extent have these comments changed from the first comment stream collected to the last, over the time posted on June 16, 2011?

My research questions are closely connected to my literature review through the exploration and defining of key concepts that will guide my process of data analysis, and specifically the content analysis of the Facebook comments. These key concepts include criminal justice discourse, crowdsourcing, social media policing and the language used on Facebook. Understanding literature already developed on these concepts is important for answering my research questions and recognizing a gap. This specific gap is an analysis of the extent ‘criminal justice’ language is present on the social media site Facebook. My research questions aim to fill this gap in communication research and produce findings that will contribute to better understanding the relationship between social media and the criminal justice system.

Theoretical Framework

My research will be guided by the communication paradigm of “interpretivism”. The application of the interpretivism approach is important, as I will be interpreting the data or language in terms of what is defined as “criminal justice” discourse. I will consider Erving Goffman’s theory of “frame analysis” through which he explores the organization of experience. I will be applying frame analysis after my data is coded to determine what categories or possible frames have emerged. Interpretivism is connected with my theoretical approach of frame analysis because for frames to be created my data needs to be analyzed through the process of interpretation. For example, what is categorized as “criminal justice” discourse is acknowledged through the application of a “frame” after the data is interpreted.

Frame Analysis

Goffman presents the question of “what is it that’s going on here?” This question can be applied to any circumstance; the answer to this question is what framework will be applied (Goffman, 1974). Individuals experience situations differently; therefore, a description of the same event may differ depending on the person and their interpretation. The purpose of frameworks is to organize society and make sense of events (Goffman, 1974). During any specific moment of activity an individual is likely to apply several frameworks to describe an event. Frameworks are constantly being applied to the interpretation of an event, as an individual cannot simply glance at an action or event without applying a framework. Individuals can also be wrong in their interpretations of an event (Goffman, 1974). This statement suggests that not all interpretations are exact or a sole explanation for describing or framing an event.

Primary Framework: Natural vs. Social

Each primary framework allows for an infinite number of outcomes. The primary framework is described as the ‘original interpretation’ (Goffman, 1974). I will examine Goffman’s two separate concepts of the social primary framework and ‘strips’ when drawing connections to my second research question about the emergence of frames within the data set. For context purposes I will also explain Goffman’s exploration on natural primary frameworks, as this is important for placing the social primary framework in perspective and drawing distinctions between the applications of these two frameworks. Natural primary frameworks are occurrences identified as undirected and unguided; these represent the natural formation of events or actions in society. There is no willful agency involved and no directly intended result. Natural primary frameworks are relatable to physical and biological sciences; for example, the state of the weather as given in a report demonstrates a natural primary framework (Goffman, 1974). A natural primary framework can also be identified through the actions of a sunrise or sunset, as the movements of the sun occur naturally in the environment.

Social primary frameworks aim to control and guide an event. This framework is based on will and guided doings; there is a direct effort of motive and intent to produce a specific outcome. An example of a social primary framework is the way in which a newscast reports the weather; this is an illustration of a social primary framework (Goffman, 1974). A social primary framework is also demonstrated through the action of pulling down a blind. This action is not a natural occurrence, as it requires the guided and intended movement of an individual to pull down the shade.

The social primary framework can be applied to the content contribution in the Facebook group and the actions that guide citizens to upload images and content. Under the 'About' section on the Facebook page are guiding instructions for the public to upload images. The 'About' section provides guidance to Facebook users when posting information. The description in the 'About' section makes a comparison between the lack of technology during the 1994 riots and the photo evidence now available in 2011 that could ultimately bring perpetrators to justice. "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" is believed to be a strong deterrent for future criminal actions. This example demonstrates the guiding 'frames' citizens were influenced by when choosing to upload content. Though natural and social primary frameworks are separate, guided actions cannot be accomplished effectively without some form of natural order; therefore, to an extent guided doings are connected with a natural schema. All social frameworks involve a different set of rules governing the guided actions. Social frameworks are important for understanding what guides Facebook users to contribute information and make active posts in the Facebook group.

'Strips'

According to Goffman, a 'strip' is defined as an "excerpt from the stream of an ongoing activity; this includes sequences of happenings as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them" (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). This concept can be applied to the individual comments uploaded to the Facebook group because each one represents a different Facebook users perspective on a particular incident from the riot. The broader category of the 2011 Vancouver riots connects these individual strips and creates a cohesive set of information.

Historical Approach to Understanding Social Movements

Creed, Langstrack, and Scully (2002) discuss the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis. Frame analysis is a tool that has been applied to understanding the formation and development of social movements. This idea can be applied to the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos", as it can be argued that the online group was an example of a social movement with the direct goal of bringing attention to those responsible for the riots. The article states, "all texts, regardless of how clear or abstruse they may be, are comprised of packages of integrated idea elements held together by the same unifying central concept, called a frame" (Creed et al., p. 37). The frame describes the cohesiveness of comments in the Facebook group. Frame analysis is a critical tool in organizing perspectives into categories. Frames motivate action and outline factors that define what the 'problem' is (Creed et al.). These frames can be identified through the variety of comments expressed in the Facebook group.

Concluding Thoughts to My Theoretical Approach

Frame analysis can be applied to my MRP as a form of understanding the kind of language and content individual users contributed to the comment section. Each Facebook contributor applies his or her own 'frame' to the situation they observe. This 'frame' is reflected through their choice of language. The structure of Facebook is a visual frame and recognition of this frame is important for understanding my research site. Further research should be pursued to understand Facebook as a separate frame of analysis. I can speculate that citizens may already have a 'frame' of the purpose of Facebook prior to contributing content. It is the structure of frames that set up participants for interacting with events on Facebook.

Literature Review

The following section will review literature that explore concepts relevant to my MRP. These concepts are important for defining terms, as well as identifying what research has already been conducted on elements of this topic. The topics discussed in my literature review include the criminal justice system, crowdsourcing, policing social media, surveillance, language on Facebook and examining Facebook as a communication tool. These areas are important for framing my research questions and carrying out my qualitative analysis on the comments posted to the Facebook group.

Criminal Justice System

Understanding what is characterized as the criminal justice system is important for the content analysis of my data, as well as answering my first research question in regard to the extent of criminal justice discourse present in the Facebook comments. I have established a definition that integrates multiple scholars' perspectives when interpreting my MRP data. Goff's definition delves into the roles of agencies specifically involved in the justice system. He states, "the criminal justice system involves the three agencies including: the police, courts, and corrections; individuals are processed through these agencies" (Goff, 2004, p. 5). Another important component of his definition states, "controlling crime is possible in part by the arrest, prosecution, and punishment of those individuals who commit crimes" (Goff, 2004, p. 5).

Feeley characterizes the organization of the criminal justice system as a social unit that is devoted to the attainment of specific goals. His application of this concept to the criminal justice system suggests that the task of the organization is "to process arrests, determine guilt or innocence, and in the case of guilt to specify an appropriate sanction"

(Feeley, 1973, p. 407). Based on these perspectives I define the criminal justice system as *the organization with the task of processing arrests, determining guilt or innocence and in the case of guilt to specify an appropriate sanction. It includes the processing of individuals through the agency of the police and personnel involved in the prevention of and response to crime.* Defining the criminal justice system is important for carrying out the content analysis of my data and understanding the extent of criminal justice discourse utilized within the Facebook comments.

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing literature is important for my MRP because it explains the Facebook users actions in contributing content to the online group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. Jeff Howe coined the term “crowdsourcing” and defined it as,

“the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively), but is also often undertaken by sole individuals. The crucial prerequisite is the use of the open call format and the wide network of potential labor” (Howe, 2006, para. 4).

Howe (2008) states that online communities are at the heart of crowdsourcing, providing a context and a structure within which the “work” takes place.

Wexler (2011) is another scholar who explores the concept of crowdsourcing. He suggests that through the reconfiguration of the classical sociological treatment of the crowd, crowdsourcing is able to emerge. Specifically, Wexler’s exploration of the third phase of crowd theorizing is an important area of research, as this concept can be directly applied to those who contributed content to “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. The third phase of the crowd is distinguished as the problem solver (Wexler, 2011).

There are no power struggles in phase three as the elite and crowd are the same entity of individuals. This lack of a hierarchical structure such as in phase three provides benefits to all those involved in the crowd. Crowd participants at equal levels emphasize an open community of voluntary knowledge in which citizens provide information for the purpose of a 'good cause' (Wexler, 2011).

Social Media as a Tool in Policing

In his article 'Policing Social Media', Trottier (2012b) proposes a theoretical framework demonstrating how police benefit from the information already exchanged on social media. The findings in this article provide an explanation of how the police were able to utilize social media when investigating the 2011 riot; they were able to do so as a result of the communication and interaction regularly occurring on Facebook. Facebook originated as an everyday tool of communication. According to Trottier the culture of Facebook has uniquely changed, as it can now be utilized as an investigative tool. Understanding the culture of Facebook is important in recognizing the shift in communication practice. The development and progression of Facebook demonstrates the major differences between the use of communication technology in the 1994 riots compared to 2011 (Trottier, 2012b). The inclusion of social media in the 2011 riots allowed for instant communication of photographic evidence, which documented the riots.

Crowdsourcing is acknowledged as an aid in social media policing. Social media is described as a distributed technology, and through social media users are able to actively contribute content and collaborate among themselves. The inclusions of both top-down and bottom-up efforts are recognized as contributing actions in that social

media serves a societal policing function (Trottier, 2012b). Communication through words, interactions and events allows the components of citizens' social lives to be mediated on social platforms; social media users are continually involved in the efforts of policing through the participation on a social site. "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" is a space on social media that allows for the stimulation of conversation and the development of discourse. Social media provides the public with the ability to be actively involved in investigations (Trottier, 2012b).

The 2011 Vancouver riots represent a turning point in social media policing. Prior to this event communication technology had not been used to such an extent that heavily increased the visibility and identification of individuals. The Facebook group created a shift towards an increased amount of surveillance through virtual communities (Trottier, 2012b). Trottier's research and theoretical framework provides an understanding into how social media serves a societal policing function and specifically the actions taken when incorporating social media as a tool into the investigations of the Vancouver 2011 riots. Previous research conducted on social media as a tool in policing provides insight into connections between the justice system and social media.

Facebook has been explored as a tool of interpersonal surveillance because of its ability to construct an online profile, upload images and share personal information. Facebook allows for unanticipated visibility as a result of interpersonal online connections. In the article 'Interpersonal Surveillance on Social Media' Trottier (2012a) states that it is not until after users join Facebook that they realize the heightened level of surveillance and opportunities for visibility. This information is important for my MRP because it indicates that Facebook users do recognize the capacity of Facebook as a

surveillance tool. Respondents described interpersonal surveillance on Facebook as the action of being watched by others. This relates directly to the actions of monitoring that occurred on the Vancouver 2011 Facebook group. The term ‘interpersonal surveillance’ represents the communication occurring online (2012a).

Surveillance

Surveillance is defined as the actions in which individuals are watched in society. The individual or group conducting the surveying actions holds the power. In surveillance activities specific attention is aimed at attaining personal details for the purpose of influence, management, protection or detection. These stated purposes allow for control to be placed on a population (Marwick, 2012). Understanding surveillance is important for my MRP as this concept describes the actions of watching others. Following the Vancouver 2011 riots surveillance of riot participants was monitored and analyzed through Facebook in an effort to identify culprits and lay arrests. Monitoring the behaviour of riot participants through social media has allowed for justice to be served on those citizens that broke the law June 15 2011 the night of the Vancouver Stanley Cup riot.

Interactivity is a characterization of the actions that take place through surveillance. Interactivity is an important component of surveillance technology because, as stated by Andrejevic (2006, p. 393), interactivity is “a technologically enhanced cornerstone of democratic participation as it represents the ability not just to see and hear, but to be seen and heard.” This quote explains the connection between interactivity and technology and states there is a two way method of observation, observing others but also being the subject of observation. The idea of being observed can be applied to the role of

Facebook in user interactivity surrounding the Vancouver 2011 riots. Facebook users are contributing information about the riot; however, through participating in the online comment threads users also have the ability to be watched and scrutinized for their own personal comments.

In an interactive society the involvement of technology allows the public to gather information and monitor other citizens' behaviour. Access to technology permits the public to be in communication with others; this contributes to the formation of a participatory democracy (Andrejevic, 2006). Technology is an influential factor that has brought surveillance services to there high level of sophistication. The rapid increase in camera quality improves the availability of monitoring systems and further encourages citizens to engage in the actions of surveillance (Remagnino, Shihab & Jones, 2004). The presence of cameras in mobile devices allowed citizens easy access to capturing rioters on camera in the 2011 riots.

Web 2.0 and Facebook provide users the tools needed to understand the daily events and activity involvement of their contacts. Social media technology gives users the continual ability to study and investigate people they are connected to online. The terms 'stalking', 'watching', 'creeping', 'gazing' and 'looking' describe the actions of surveillance that take place on social media sites such as Facebook (Marwick, 2012). The understanding that users are being watched by other users creates the effect modeled after Jeremy Bentham's prison the 'Panopticon'. This form of penitentiary was designed in a circle where the guard tower was located in the middle and the cells surrounded the center. The surveillance theory behind this structural design was that people were never fully certain if they were being watched; this caused prisoners to monitor their own

actions because of never knowing if they were being viewed by a guard. Below is an image of the structure of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design.



The panopticon effect can be applied to the actions people take when monitoring their online behaviour. In online communities users have the dual ability to watch others; however, are also subjected to being watched themselves (Marwick, 2012). Online communication forums facilitate users in gathering information. This process of collecting information is normalized by the domestication of social media in society today. Shift in surveillance activity to becoming more accessible to citizens through daily interactions in relationships has been referred to as “lateral surveillance”, “participatory surveillance”, “social searching” and “social surveillance” (Marwick, 2012). The Facebook group demonstrates how social media technology is directly involved in the process of surveillance. The ability to post images allows for a dialogue to take place and surveillance to be utilized through monitoring conversations between Facebook users.

Social surveillance is defined as the “ongoing investigation, gossip and inquiry that constitutes information gathering by people about their peers, made possible by the social digitization normalized by social media. It encompasses using social media sites to

broadcast information, survey content created by others and regulating one's own content based on perceptions of the audience" (Marwick, 2012, p. 382). Social surveillance occurs across multiple communication platforms or on a specific social media site such as Facebook. Social surveillance accurately describes the monitoring actions that took place on "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the inclusion of the public. The descriptors of power, hierarchy and reciprocity distinguish the concept of social surveillance as a separate entity from other types of surveillance. Power applies to social surveillance as this concept assumes a model of power flowing through all social relationships. In social surveillance a hierarchy is placed between individuals. Reciprocity is an important aspect because people that engage in social surveillance also produce online content that is surveyed by others. Social surveillance is a practice that can be observed in the event of the Vancouver 2011 riot. This form of surveillance is an essential part of social media use today demonstrating the changing direction and potential activity for social sites in the future (Marwick, 2012).

There are increasing concerns with surveillance as it continues to develop with technology in society. Facial recognition software poses concern for privacy issues and the possibility of sharing information. Sharing information between private and public entities raises debate on the ethical issues surrounding the purchasing of information (Gray, 2002). Surveillance does have the potential to act as a watch-dog as seen through the application of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos"; however, invasion of privacy is also a possible outcome which must be accounted for by those Facebook users involved in the surveillance activity.

Language on Facebook

Schneider and Trottier (2012) discuss the relationship between Facebook and crowdsourced policing as identified in the Facebook group. In “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos,” crowdsourced policing is identified as the engagement of citizens in police work on social media sites. This characterization demonstrates that citizens are not involved in formal law enforcement operations, but are increasingly taking on the voluntary role of being pseudo-police officers (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). Schneider and Trottier’s qualitative analysis reveals how Facebook users characterize those that perceive to be responsible for the riot (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). This finding is important, as it draws conclusions of the language used within the Facebook group and identifies ‘types’ of criminal justice discourse.

Crowdsourcing is the conceptual framework applied by Schneider and Trottier (2012) to explain this ongoing notion of lateral surveillance adopted by the public. This framework is directly applied to the policing taking place on the Facebook group. Social media technologies have allowed for the development of the modern “wanted” poster (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). The combination of social media and publically-contributed content allows for the quick collection of evidence that can identify individuals. Social media is a platform in which users can create online narratives without the assistance of the police. These narratives reflected the emotion of social media users in their response to the riot; within only ten minutes of the game ending there was the collective action of gathering photographs and personal information in an online community (Schneider & Trottier, 2012). The sequence of the online narrative and the

responses generated by the public are important when studying the change of language on the Facebook group over the one date of June 16, 2011.

Through a qualitative study of language, the theme of ‘stupidity’ was represented within the discourse of the multiple comments. Schneider and Trottier’s (2012) research on the Vancouver riots concluded that criminal justice discourse paired with the availability of new media indicates that crowdsourced policing will only increase in development. The police also made public appeals on Facebook; this combination with crowdsourcing indicates the further expansion of police surveillance in everyday life. There are challenges and frustrations present within the use of social media for the purpose of law enforcement. The development of better solutions would provide an increased benefit between the relations of social media and law enforcement. This relationship is only beginning and must be further investigated (Schneider & Trottier, 2012).

Facebook as a Communication Tool

Facebook is a form of communication technology and is considered an online social network. An online social network is “an Internet community where individuals interact often through profiles that (re) present their public persona to others” (Acquisti & Gross, 2006, p. 38). This concept can be applied to the communication occurring in the Facebook group ‘Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos’ through the exchange of conversation. Facebook is one component that contributes to the development and understanding of online social networking sites. From a historical context Facebook was created in 2004 targeting only the online group of college networks, specifically only Harvard to begin; however, later developed to include all college networks. This meant

that to have a Facebook account the user needed a university email address (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The purpose of a specific target audience suggested that the site was heavily controlled. This contributed to users' perceptions that Facebook was an intimate, closed and private community (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). In September 2005 Facebook expanded to include high school students, professionals within corporate networks and eventually everyone. This rapid rise of social network sites indicates a shift in the organization of online communities; as between 2004 and 2005 the communication platform changed to include not only a small selected group of users, but also the general public (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Facebook distinguishes its features among online social networks as a result of its success among the college crowd, the amount and quality of personal information users make available on it, and the transparency of information that is personally identified (Acquisti & Gross, 2006). The mission of Facebook is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, 2013, Newsroom: Key Facts). Facebook is used to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them. As of March 2013 Facebook had 655 million daily active users on average (Facebook, 2013). Facebook's mission statement can be applied to describe how users' interacted with the communication tool during the Vancouver 2011 riots, as users' had the tools to share information instantaneously with other Facebook members. A new form of 'making the world more open and connected' is illustrated through utilizing the actions of crowdsourcing within the Facebook group, 'Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos'.

Methodology

Collecting data for this project occurred on the public Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”, which was created on June 16, 2011. The sample consists of five Facebook images and their associated comment threads. Image selection was based on each sample matching a required criteria.

Criteria for Sample Selection

1. Number of Comments

The uploaded image must have between 25-40 comments posted underneath it. This designated number allows for a dialogue to develop and to form a substantial basis for analysis and interpretation. Uploaded images that have fewer than 25 comments were excluded from the sample, since fewer than 25 restricts a conversation from developing fully. Images that had over 40 comments were not included in the sample as this number of comments exceeds the data collection required for the MRP. Comment streams with more than 40 comments were also deemed to be too difficult to manage for the purposes of the research project. Collecting images with comment threads between 25 to 40 postings ensures an ample amount of data is collected, available for evaluation and easy to manage. I chose these limits for the purposes of the scope of my MRP.

2. Non-Manipulated Images

The uploaded image must not be manipulated in any form. Images that had been drawn on or esthetically changed to any extent were eliminated from the sample. This also included refraining from incorporating images that had been uploaded to

the Facebook group as screen shots. The purpose of including only images that have not been manipulated is to ensure consistency and authenticity in regard to the images uploaded to the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”.

3. National News Source Publication

The uploaded image to the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” must have been published in either the *Globe and Mail* or the *National Post* online news source. Holding a connection to one of these news sources demonstrates a form of credibility in the uploaded image. Image credibility is important for establishing the authenticity of the uploaded image, as there are hundreds of possible pictures posted in the Facebook group. The chosen sample images published in credible national news sources also add to the validity and reliability of the image. I chose these two newspapers to keep my scope narrow and specifically examine news sources that produce national coverage. The *Globe and Mail* is one of Canada’s national newspapers. This news source has been in print for 167 years and is described online as a communication tool providing “authoritative coverage on national topics...in depth reporting on issues, facts and opinions” (The *Globe and Mail*, 2013, About Our Newspaper). The *National Post* is a second Canadian newspaper providing national coverage that communicates a distinct Canadian voice through its reporting practices. The *National Post* is described as having “award winning reporting with hard-hitting analysis to take you inside stories that count...critical information and original

insight” (The National Post, 2013, Media Kit). The riots were a local issue that directly affected the downtown core of Vancouver; however, what is particularly interesting is how quickly this local issue became a larger social problem that was communicated across the country by these two national news sources.

4. Order of Uploaded Images

The five uploaded images and the corresponding comment threads were selected based on a chronological timeline. The samples were chosen by going back to the beginning of when the images were posted on June 16, 2011 and moving forward based on having between 25-40 comments, images not being manipulated in any way and images also coinciding with being published in the Globe and Mail or the National Post online.

Table 1: MRP Sample

Table 1: MRP Sample outlines the specific components and criteria that each sample contains. *Table 1: MRP Sample* states the sample number, the chronological number in which the image is uploaded to the Facebook group, the external news source the image can be found in and the total number of comments that are being examined under each image for the purpose of analysis.

Table 1: MRP Sample

Sample Number	Order of Image	News source	Number of Comments
Image and Comment Thread #1	12 th image uploaded to the Facebook group	Globe and Mail	25 comments
Image and Comment Thread #2	36 th image uploaded to the Facebook group	Globe and Mail	27 comments
Image and Comment Thread #3	172 nd image uploaded to the Facebook group	National Post	32 comments
Image and Comment Thread #4	176 th image uploaded to the Facebook group	National Post	34 comments
Image and Comment Thread #5	306 th image uploaded to the Facebook group	National Post	38 comments

Each image collected in the sample is a different photograph. It is significant to state that image and comment thread #3 was found to be a duplicated picture; this was the only sample item that reoccurred multiple times in the data collection. Image and comment thread #3 depicts a young man lighting a police car on fire. Once already part of the research sample as ‘image and comment thread #3’ all other identical images were discarded from the sample. For example image #274 met the sample criteria of having the required amount of comments, not being manipulated and being linked to a news source; however, this was a duplicated picture of image and comment thread #3 that was already

included in the sample and therefore was excluded from collection. If the sample were larger image #319, 333 and 357 would also all be classified as duplicates of image and comment thread #3. Reposted images were not included in the sample to ensure the conversation content was not only surrounding one image.

The criteria for sample collection was based on the best approach to answering the outlined research questions of my MRP. It is important that the volume of comments are large enough for the extent of criminal justice discourse to be evaluated. Collecting the sample based on its chronological order within the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos” allows for a content analysis of the comments to be analyzed during the one day of June 16, 2011. Goffman’s theory of frame analysis and the development of ‘frames’ are identified through the structure and language use that can emerge in the Facebook comments. Analyzing the sample also identifies whether or not comments follow Goffman’s concept of the social primary framework; more specifically, is the content of the comments guided by the outlined information indicated as the ‘purpose of communication’ within the Facebook group.

Results

The following table is a code book indicating how my MRP data was coded and interpreted. My MRP sample was coded and organized based on larger categories, as well as smaller categories within the larger categories. The larger categories include: criminal justice discourse, language use, identification and crowdsourcing actions. An example of each smaller category is also included in the table. Each code is distinguished by a number, which is organized in chronological order.

Table 2: Code Book

Criminal Justice Discourse

Code	Category	Example
A	Broad and general terminology	“jail” “guilty” “stolen” “evidence” “police”
B	Specific reference to local law enforcement, Vancouver Police Department (VPD)	“Please report to the VPD”
C	Reference made to justice system consequences	“Have fun in jail losers!”
D	Reference terminology classified as criminal justice slang	“looted” “busted”

Language Use

Code	Category	Example
E	Profanity	“fuck” “retarded” “dumbass”
F	Negative descriptors	“stupid” “dumb” “idiot” “loser”

Identification (of individual in picture posted to Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”)

Code	Category	Example
G	Individual’s personal name	“Sundeep Malhi”
H	Reference location	“Maple Ridge”
I	General public identification	“I got footage of this guy shooting off fireworks too”
J	Question posed about an individual’s identity; plea to find out identity	“Someone please ID this loser”

Identification (of individual making comments underneath the uploaded image)

Code	Category	Example
K	Individual’s personal name	“Corey”

Identification (of individual that originally captured uploaded image)

Code	Category	Example
L	Individual’s personal name	“Rich Lam”

Crowdsourcing Actions

Code	Category	Example
M	Directions to Vancouver Police Department (VPD)	“Head to the VPD website, they give ways to give any info you have anonymously if you want.”
N	Use of a camera and the actions of picture taking	“Smile your on camera.”
O	Links to additional media sources	“oh yeah? He takes a pretty sweet swing at the window in this video”
P	Crowdsourcing actions used to defend individual in picture	“I heard he was actually helping out. People need to know the context of the photos before they start posting them”
Q	Reference to shaming or embarrassment; demonstrates disapproval with actions.	“These people r an embarrassment to this city.”
R	Information stated that individual was arrested	“Just so everyone knows he was arrested this morning by the police”

Image and Comment Thread #1: Vancouver Rioters Flipping a Car



The first sample collected is identified as ‘image and comment thread #1’. This sample is the twelfth image posted in the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. The image corresponding with comment thread #1 can be found online in the national news source publication the *Globe and Mail*. Twenty-five comments are posted underneath the first image collected in the sample. Image one is of a group of rioters flipping over a black car. Some rioters in the image are wearing Vancouver

Canucks hockey jerseys. The content of the conversation was primarily over a racist comment that one Facebook user posted, which made some form of derogatory reference to the colour of skin of the individuals in image one. This comment is no longer in the comment thread. The individual that posted the initial comment that began the heated conversation is referenced by the name 'Corey'. The conversation became heated because of the direct exchange of dialogue that questioned the actions amongst Facebook users. For example one comment stated, "@corey whats with the racism ? what does flipping a car have to do with what colored skin people are doing it? white or brown, both are equally guilty, you shouldn't be accounting race for their behaviour. just sayin [sic]". There is no longer an individual by the name 'Corey' part of the conversation. The content of the comment thread for image one primarily focused on the discussion of Corey's racist remark.

There are only two comments in the thread of twenty-five that make direct reference to the actions of the rioters in the photo. The first two out of twenty-five are in direct response to the image uploaded to the Facebook group. These initial comments make a statement in response to the visual image of the group of rioters flipping a car. The first comment by Mitchell Funkhouser Cal states, "great picture showing more faces [sic]" and the second comment posted by Laura Bank states, "I'm seeing a good haul of fingerprints...". Following these two comments it appears a racist comment was made early on in the thread (now removed); this ended the conversation about identifying individuals in the photograph and the focus became on the racist comment. The dialogue persisted to identify and single out the user by the name of 'Corey' that allegedly made the first racist comment, which began the diverted conversation. When Facebook users

reference the racist statement by 'Corey' there was a high level of profanity and negative descriptors used when characterizing the alleged racist comment. The content of comment thread one is primarily focused on discussing the racist actions stated by the user 'Corey'.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of crowdsourcing?

The first research question addresses the extent of criminal justice discourse used in the comments. The content analysis revealed that in image and comment thread #1 out of twenty-five comments criminal justice discourse was found four times. Three of the four occurrences were located at the beginning of the comment thread and one was identified in the middle of the comment thread in the thirteenth comment posted. There is a low amount of 'criminal justice' discourse expressed in this comment thread, as it can only be identified four times in the conversation. This thread shows that once the conversation changed to the focus of the user 'Corey' that made the racist comment, there was a decrease in the overall reference made to 'criminal justice' discourse; the last reference to 'criminal justice' discourse was made in the thirteenth comment. It appears that once the conversation changed directions and no longer focused on the rioters in the image, but instead targeted the individual 'Corey' who made the racist comment, the frequency of reference made to criminal justice discourse deteriorated. Perhaps if the racist comment was not stated early on in the conversation there would have been a greater extent of 'criminal justice' discourse found in the first comment thread. In connection to the first research question image and comment thread #1 demonstrates a

low amount of criminal justice discourse present in the comments, as a result of the conversation focusing on a racist remark as opposed to the rioters in the image.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

The second research question focuses on the emergence of 'frames' within the data. In the first image and comment thread Facebook users began to post as instructed by the guidelines outlined in the "About" description on the Facebook group. The "About" section is the guiding social primary framework. The guiding social primary framework states the intent of the Facebook group is to identify the suspects in the photos that caused damage during the riots; however, it was found through the first image and comment thread that as soon as a racist comment was made about the individuals in the photo, the frame of interpretation changed from identifying the guilty rioters to focusing comments on the racist remark. This instance demonstrates a switch in what is identified as the primary problem within the conversation. The content remains about the Vancouver riots, but the specific focus is different than originally outlined in the "About" section. There is a change of conversation in the comment thread from identifying the rioters in the uploaded image to the identification through crowdsourcing of the individual who made the initial racist comment. The identification of the individual who made the racist comment is labeled as 'Corey' and identification is carried out through stating a specific name, as well as including a Facebook tag of that name. The content analysis demonstrates the frame identification is present within comment thread #1.

Crowdsourcing emerged as a frame within the comment thread. Throughout the conversation references made to shaming, embarrassment or some form of disapproval of actions was the most common example found of crowdsourcing. This form of disapproval was demonstrated through comments made directly about the individuals flipping cars, for example “Who the fuck do they think they are? Americans? Not exceptable [sic]. If I was God I would send them to hockey hell </3 [sic]”. This comment illustrates the frame of crowdsourcing and the actions of disapproval. In the category of crowdsourcing the content analysis also revealed the emergence of references made to the act of taking a picture. This was identified in the first comment in the thread; however, as a result of the conversation that developed there was only one comment made on the actions of picture taking. Profane language and negative descriptors were heavily referenced within image and comment thread #1; both reached a total of nine occurrences. This vocabulary was presented both in the context of describing the riots, as well as describing the individual in the comment thread who made the racist remark.

Image and Comment Thread #2: Vancouver Rioters Holding Allegedly Stolen Coach Handbag



The second sample in my MRP data analysis is identified as ‘image and comment thread #2’. This was the thirty-sixth image posted. The image corresponding with comment thread #2 can be found online in the national news source publication the *Globe*

and Mail. There are twenty-seven comments posted underneath the second image collected in the sample. Image #2 shows rioters standing in front of a burning car. There are two main individuals depicted in the photo; both have Vancouver Canucks jerseys and one is holding a Coach handbag. The conversation surrounding this image was primarily around the actions taking place in the image, as it appears that one Vancouver rioter is holding a purse. The conversation began with descriptive statements describing the actions in the photograph, specifically referencing the individual stealing the purse. As the conversation continues reference to stealing the purse persisted and mention of criminal justice discourse increases. Further development of the conversation revealed references to personal identification. The conversation concluded with an emphasis placed on crowdsourcing with the effort of directing information towards the Vancouver Police Department, as they are responsible for charging the rioters.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?

As a result of the content analysis of image and comment thread #2 criminal justice discourse was identified in nine of the twenty-seven comments. Specific reference was made three times to the Vancouver Police Department, which occurred at the end of the comment thread in the last five postings. Stating the chronological ordering of when the statements were made in the comment thread is important because image and comment thread #2 is a positive example of the efficacy of Facebook as a helpful tool for police. The theme of criminal justice is present throughout the entire thread and its occurrence at the end of the comments show a closing statement in relation to criminal

justice discourse. My content analysis found that typically when comments were characterized as criminal justice discourse it was made through a phrase or statement about a consequence of the justice system. The content of the comment thread is related to the theme of criminal justice as the language is focused on the illegal activity of stealing and specifically stealing a Coach bag in the image. References to slang criminal justice language is stated twice; the terminology 'looted' and 'busted' is used to describe the actions of the rioters in the image. The use of 'criminal justice' discourse is followed by personal name identification made to the individual in the photo that appears to be stealing a Coach handbag. Commenters recommend that information be forwarded to the Vancouver Police Department. This guiding action demonstrates the combination of both criminal justice discourse as well as crowdsourcing. Reference made to 'criminal justice' discourse increased as the conversation developed.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

There were multiple frames that formed in image and comment thread #2. My content analysis of image and comment thread #2 reveals that Facebook users posted information based on the principle of the social primary framework as outlined by Goffman. Individuals contributed information based on the guiding frame outlined in the Facebook group, which stated the intention of the online group was to identify rioters in the photos. Facebook users began with identifying the descriptive context of the picture; this later developed into the identification of individuals in the Facebook photo. This was followed by reference made to formal crowdsourcing actions through directing Facebook

commenters to forward information on rioters identities directly to the Vancouver Police Department. The majority of crowdsourcing in image and comment thread #2 focused on diverting images to the Vancouver Police Department; these statements were found in the 23, 24 and 26 comments. Crowdsourcing was also shown through reference made to the actions of a camera and picture taking such as “smile your on camera”, as well as expressing the feelings of shame and embarrassment for the individuals in the photo. For example shame and embarrassment can be found in the statement “be ashamed to give that to your girlfriend or your mom a stolen bag!!!idiot!! [sic]”. Both these actions were separately referenced once in the comment thread when describing the actions of the rioters in image #2.

Image and Comment Thread #3: Vancouver Rioter Lighting a Police Car on Fire



The third sample collected for my MRP data analysis is identified as ‘image and comment thread #3’. This sample was the one hundred and seventy second image posted in the Facebook group. The image corresponding with comment thread #3 can be found in an online news source published by the National Post. Thirty-two comments are posted underneath the third image collected. Image #3 captures an individual wearing a Vancouver Canucks jersey attempting to lite a police car on fire. The primary focus is on the individual wearing a Canucks jersey lighting the police car on fire; behind him are a

group of other rioters standing and yelling. The conversation in the Facebook comments is on the actions of the individual in the photo that is lighting the police car on fire. There are also several comments that make reference to the shoes of the individual that is lighting the police car on fire as they are bright orange and blue; these appear to catch the attention of the individuals viewing the image online. The shoes are discussed throughout the conversation and jokes are frequently made in relation to the shoes the individual is wearing. They are also referenced as a tool for identifying the rioter in the image.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?

Criminal justice discourse was identified eleven times over thirty-two comments within image and comment thread #3. The first reference made to criminal justice discourse was made in the second comment; this included a reference to the term 'evidence'. The remainder of the criminal justice discourse was made between the eleventh and the twenty-fourth comments. The Vancouver Police Department is not referenced in this comment thread. This is important to recognize because the Vancouver Police Department is the primary authority in control of the investigation, and yet they are not mentioned. Broad or general criminal justice terminology is used on seven occurrences and a phrase expressing the consequences of the justice system is stated three times. As the conversation progresses the extent of the presence of criminal justice language increases in frequency.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

The caption under image #3 states, "What's blue, green, red and stupid all over? A Canuck fan trying to light a police car on fire. Help identify these losers." This caption is a good example of how Facebook users are following the guiding social primary framework established by the Facebook group creators. This encourages individuals to contribute helpful information to identify rioters and reinforces the guiding purpose of the goal of the Facebook group as stated in the 'About' section. The frames of identification, crowdsourcing and language use are present within the content of the comment threads. These themes intertwine with the criminal justice nature of the conversation. The frame of identification is made in the seventh comment posted with reference to the name 'Josh'. The recognition of 'Josh' illustrates a personal identification is being made in the comment thread. The name 'Josh' is also found in comments 11, 27 and 29 posted, demonstrating that as the conversation develops the goal of confirming the identity of the rioters grows in pursuit. Identification is communicated through indicating the location of residence of the alleged rioters. In image and comment thread #3 the information states that the rioter is from Maple Ridge and more specifically is on the water polo team there. Reference is also made to a general public identification through the example, "I got footage of this guy shooting off fireworks too...".

The frame of crowdsourcing is revealed through examples of shaming and embarrassment, such as "I hope they show these photos on the news for the next month until every one of them is charged". Shaming and embarrassment were identified three

times in image and comment thread #3. Crowdsourcing was also found in reference to the actions of picture taking or the use of a camera. There were no statements made that directed information to the Vancouver Police Department. The use of profane language was found in four occurrences and negative descriptors were used twice when describing the actions in image and comment thread #3.

Image and Comment Thread #4: Couple Kissing in the Vancouver Riots



The fourth sample collected for my MRP data analysis is identified as ‘image and comment thread #4’. Image four is of a couple lying on the ground kissing. In the background of this image are a group of rioters along with rioting police trying to control the crowd. This sample was the one hundred and seventy sixth image posted in “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. The image corresponding with comment thread #4 can be found in an online news source published by the National Post. There are thirty-four comments posted underneath the fourth image collected. The conversation surrounding this image was primarily over whether or not the image posted was digitally altered using Photoshop or not, as the image is of a couple laying on the ground kissing in the middle of a riot. The exchange of dialogue was focused on the authenticity of the image and what did or did not make the photo a product of modification.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?

The extent of criminal justice discourse used in image and comment thread #4 is minimal. The only reference to criminal justice discourse is stated when making a connection to the term 'police'. The term 'police' is referenced within the context of the image, as there is an outline of a police officer in front of the couple kissing as well as behind the couple. There is no specific reference to the Vancouver Police Department. The term "police" or "cop" is used four times and can specifically be found in comment seven, nine, twenty-one and twenty-seven. The term "police" or "cop" is the only reference made to the criminal justice system. There are no justice system consequences made in image and comment thread #4. Criminal justice slang is not used when describing the actions in the image, and a minimal amount of criminal justice discourse was found in comment thread #4.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

The frame categorizing language use in image and comment thread #4 revealed a minimal use of profanity being exchanged between Facebook users. Out of thirty-four comments in the Facebook thread there were two occurrences of profanity and one instance when a negative descriptor was used. The frame of identification can also be found in image and comment thread #4 through instances of individuals referencing other individuals in the Facebook conversation. The identification of individuals making the

comments in the thread was the only frame of identification in image and comment thread #4. This demonstrates a back and fourth conversation between Facebook users. The individual that allegedly took the picture is identified in the comment thread; through this identification there is the effort to show credibility through identifying the source that captured the original image. There were no frames of identification made of the individuals kissing in the photo. Crowdsourcing was identified through the frame of individuals using the comment stream to defend the actions of the rioters in the photo. In image and comment thread #4 this defensive behaviour was focused on the discussion of the individuals kissing behaviour. The actions of picture taking or the use of a camera, as well as links to additional media sources were also found in image and comment thread #4.

Image and Comment Thread #5: Vancouver Rioter in Front of Smashed Bank Window



The fifth sample collected for my MRP data analysis is identified as ‘image and comment thread #5’. This was the three hundred and sixth image posted in “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. The image corresponding with comment thread #5 can be

found in an online news source published by the National Post. There are thirty-eight comments posted underneath the fifth image collected. Image #5 is of a Vancouver rioter standing in front of a bank with broken windows. The man in the photo is screaming and holding a hockey stick in his hand; this is the primary content of the comments. The comments demonstrate disapproval of the individual's actions; however, there are also statements that defend the individual in the photo, explaining that the image was taken out of context. This exchange of information illustrates the dialogue among Facebook users surrounding image and comment thread #5. The conversation begins with descriptive statements about the individual's actions and progresses to a direct means of identification through the tool of crowdsourcing.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?

A high amount of criminal justice discourse was found in image and comment thread #5. Reference to broad or general criminal justice discourse was found in sixteen occurrences. The use of criminal justice discourse was referenced throughout the entire conversation. There were no references made to the services of the Vancouver Police Department, and no criminal justice slang terminology such as 'busted' or 'looted'. Justice system consequences were referenced nine times when describing what the repercussions would be as a result of the actions of the individual in image #5. The most common consequence stated by Facebook users was the possibility of serving time in jail.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

There were multiple frames revealed in sample #5. The use of profane language was found on three occurrences and negative descriptors were identified five times within image and comment thread #5. There were several forms of identification found being communicated such as through identifying rioters in the image, identifying Facebook users in the thread by commenting on a particular statement made and by identifying the source of the individual or group where the original image was taken from. Referencing an individual's name was made on three occasions when trying to identify the perpetrator. In image and comment thread #5 the name 'Jason Li' was stated three times. The identity of the rioter was also constructed through indicating the location of 'Richmond BC' as well as the school where the individual attended, 'McRoberts Secondary School'. Before identification was made through referencing a name and location one Facebook user pleaded to find the identity of the rioter in the image; identifying remarks in regard to a personal name and location followed this statement. Facebook users participating in the conversation referenced other Facebook users on two occasions and sourcing where the photo was originally from was stated once.

There were many frames illustrating crowdsourcing in image and comment thread #5. The use of a camera or the actions of picture taking were referenced twice and there was one additional link to a media source posted. This link to an additional media source was of a YouTube clip of the individual in the photo. On four occurrences Facebook users produced comments that acted in defense of the individual in the photo, stating the

individual did not break the bank window. Shaming and embarrassment was explicitly expressed once in the comments. At the end of the comment thread following the identification frames a statement was made in the thirty third comment revealing information that the individual in the photo was arrested by the authorities. This statement indicated the conversation was concluding.

Discussion

My content analysis reveals the themes of criminal justice discourse, language use (profanity and negative descriptors), identification and crowdsourcing. The primary goal of my MRP was to have a better understanding of the efficacy of Facebook as a tool in criminal investigations. I am examining how helpful Facebook is as a communication resource for authorities when handling investigations. As a result of analyzing my sample of five image comment threads I can conclude that Facebook is a helpful tool for police in criminal investigations. Recent adoption of the social media tool in criminal investigations suggests more research should be done on the extent and limits of this approach; however, my research findings indicate there is excellent potential for the development of a positive relationship between social media and its ability in providing aid to police authorities when carrying out criminal investigations.

Connection to Research Question #1: To what extent is 'criminal justice' discourse present in the comments of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" as a result of the actions of crowdsourcing?

The first research question explores the extent of criminal justice discourse utilized in the Facebook comments. Criminal justice discourse was present in all five

comment threads; however, the amount of occurrence varied depending on the content of the comments. Image and comment thread # 2, 3 and 5 demonstrated high levels of criminal justice discourse as these three threads had at least eleven occurrences of criminal justice discourse throughout the conversation. Image and comment thread #1 and 4 showed lower levels of criminal justice discourse present with only four occurrences in the comment threads. My MRP results illustrated a difference in the number of occurrences of criminal justice discourse utilized amongst these comment threads, with three of the five possessing higher numbers and two holding lower numbers; however, through examining the content of the overall conversation and the additional frames that emerged, my MRP findings show that Facebook is a helpful resource for authorities when conducting criminal investigations. The lower amount of criminal justice discourse found in image and comment thread #1 and 4 can be attributed to the content of the comments, as there was a significant change in the direction of the dialogue at the start of the comment thread. For example, in image and comment thread #1 criminal justice discourse was stated at the very beginning of the conversation; however, once a racist comment was made the conversation completely switched direction from focusing on the rioters in the image to now targeting efforts at the Facebook user that had made the racist comment. This racist remark completely changed the frame of the conversation and resulted in less effort placed on the criminal justice nature of the conversation, which focused on the rioters flipping a car. In image and comment thread #4 there was again minimal reference made to criminal justice discourse; however, it appears this is because of the specific image itself, as it is of a couple kissing in the middle of the road. In comparison to the other uploaded images that depict violent

rioters breaking windows and stealing and lighting police cars on fire, this image of a couple kissing in the middle of the road does not directly show a violation of the law; therefore, the content of the conversation is primarily focused on the obscure place for this couple to be kissing, not that they are breaking the law. My findings indicate that had no racist comment been made early on there would have been a greater representation of criminal justice discourse found in comment thread #1. A greater amount of criminal justice discourse would have also been found in image and comment thread #4 had the conversation not been changed early. The rationale would be because of the image selected for the sample, in that the image was not of violent rioters causing damage to the city but of a couple kissing. There is a high amount of criminal justice discourse present in comment threads #2, 3 and 5. The findings indicate that these three comment threads would be directly helpful to police when investigating the riots; however, specifically looking at this sample, image and comment threads #1 and 4 would not be helpful in aiding police. Although there was only a high amount of criminal justice discourse in three of the five comment threads, the rationale for why the two comment threads had a lower presence of criminal justice discourse justifies this conclusion. Criminal justice discourse was identified in broad and general terms such as “jail”, “police”, “evidence” and “arrest”. Potential justice system consequences were made through the phrasing of statements of how those rioters should be held accountable for their actions. The Vancouver Police Department was referenced in two of the comment threads and there was a low level of criminal justice slang integrated into the conversations. I found both these MRP findings about the Vancouver Police Department and the use of slang language surprising, in that these two factors did not appear as frequently in the

conversations. I was surprised these factors occurred less frequently because the riots did occur in Vancouver; therefore, I initially anticipated there would be more references made to local law enforcement. Secondly in an online group that does not follow formal strict guidelines and allows for a wide array of public use, I anticipated a greater amount of slang phrases utilized by the public. My findings in connection to the first research question suggest that three of the five comment threads held higher levels of criminal justice discourse. These three comment threads would be directly helpful to police for investigative procedures, due to their high amount of criminal justice discourse.

Connection to Research Question #2: What 'frames' have been formed in the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" through the application of Goffman's theory of frame analysis?

The structure of the Facebook group "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" can be positively applied to Goffman's theoretical perspective of frame analysis; more specifically Goffman establishes the concept of the social primary framework, which directly correlates with the accumulation of information on the Facebook group. The social primary framework is defined as, the way responses are gathered is a result of an outlined guided doing; this is identified through the actions of identification in the Facebook comments. The 'About' section on "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos" states the purpose of the online community is to share knowledge in identifying rioters through the public contribution of images and comments; identifying rioters was a sole purpose outlined through the incorporation of Facebook. The content analysis revealed that identification by personal name of the rioters in the uploaded images occurred in three of the five comment threads, this included sample #2, 3 and 5. In these comment

threads a personal name was written in reference to identifying a rioter in the image; these instances demonstrate how Facebook users followed the intended social primary framework as indicated through the creation of the Facebook group. In image and comment threads #1 and 4 there was no personal identification made of the rioters; however, there were other forms of identification revealed. For example in the first and fourth comment threads the identification of a Facebook user that had made a previous comment in the conversation was identified; this form of identification illustrates a conversation occurring through the exchange of dialogue, specifically referencing other users in the comment thread. In the fourth thread the identification of the source that supposedly took the original uploaded image was revealed. Although there is no personal identification of rioters made in comment threads #1 and 4 identification can be found through two additional occurrences; however, this lack in personal identification can be attributed to the major diversion of content in both conversations. The form of identification essentially switched with the change in conversation direction. Identification of riot participants was successful in comment threads #2, 3 and 5; these examples demonstrate the potential of the practices of identification through the tool of Facebook. Image and comment threads #3 and 5 also include examples of identification through location. This piece of information is helpful for police authorities when confirming information on potential suspects.

The use of profane language and negative descriptors was a consistent theme in the five comment threads; however, the findings suggest a much lower level of profane language and negative descriptors in the comment threads than initially anticipated. Amongst the five comment threads the use of profanity and negative descriptors occurred

between three and nine times within each individual thread. When comparing these numbers to the occurrences of other emerging frames in the data they are not substantially more frequently referenced. My MRP findings show that the element of surprise and reader shock when viewing the negative connotation for the first time may contribute to the feeling of a higher level of profane language and negative descriptors. I can conclude that the frame of profane language and negative descriptors did not overpower the emergence of other frames such as identification and crowdsourcing and did not negatively contribute or affect the purpose of identifying rioters. Facebook users did become heated when describing the actions of the rioters in the photos through the inclusion of profane language; however, the extent of expression remains within the context of the photo, as the language being used is aimed at describing and showing disapproval. Recognition occurred of the consistent use of profane language and negative descriptors in the comment threads; however, it did not negatively effect or hinder the emergence of other frames.

Crowdsourcing was revealed across all five comment threads; this consistent theme demonstrates the inclusion and participation of the public in following the guiding social primary framework outlined by the Facebook group of identifying guilty rioters. The most common actions of crowdsourcing taken on by the public occurred through expressing sentiments of shame and embarrassment towards the rioters, and referencing the actions of picture taking or the use of a camera in being a successful tool for capturing guilty suspects. In comparison there were also two occurrences where instead of showing disapproval towards the individuals in the image, Facebook users defended the individuals in the photo by either saying the picture was taken out of context or the

image had been altered. Defending individuals only occurred twice throughout all five comment threads, as the overwhelming action was geared at the public taking the opportunity to show their disapproval for the rioters. Crowdsourcing was also identified through statements that typically occurred at the end of the comment thread, which directed users to forward information on to the Vancouver Police Department. Although citizens created the Facebook group this connection to the inclusion of the Vancouver Police Department demonstrates a relationship and clear lines of communication on this matter between the public and authorities. Additional links to YouTube videos where an individual in the photo was also found were uploaded to comment threads that corresponded with their specific image. This example shows the larger possible incorporation of multiple media platforms when communicating information.

The frame of crowdsourcing and identification were also illustrated through a plea for identification, in such if an identification had not been made early on in the comments Facebook users pleaded that information about the rioters identity be brought forth by the public. This frame of crowdsourcing demonstrates the public communicating with other members of the public to bring perpetrators to justice. The various crowdsourcing actions in the comment threads indicate the high level of public engagement in following the outlined guiding framework; this has resulted in helpful contributions to authorities in identifying guilty rioters and forwarding information along to officials.

Connection to Research Question #3: To what extent have these comments changed from the first comment stream collected to the last, over the time posted on June 16th, 2011?

The presence of the themes criminal justice discourse, profane language use, negative descriptors, identification and crowdsourcing remained consistent and active

themes across the comment threads on June 16, 2011. What primarily affected the emergence of the above frames was the content of the conversation and specifically which Facebook users were involved in the conversation. My findings show if one user made a comment that was taken off topic the conversation would alter directions, and ultimately this would affect whether or not the guided frames outlined by the Facebook group were followed. The themes did not change over time but remained consistent. Each frame was found in every comment thread analyzed. The amount of times a frame emerged in a comment thread was dependent on the content of the conversation and how closely Facebook users stayed on track when aiming to identify rioters.

Conclusion

My research and content analysis of my data present the findings that the communication tool Facebook would be a helpful resource for police in investigative procedures. My MRP findings conclude that Facebook would be a useful communication platform to utilize for identifying rioters and collecting public knowledge, which would aid in the processing of arrests. My sample was collected from the Facebook group based on specific criteria outlined in my methodology. I found there was a lot of information being communicated in the Facebook comments; however, after dissecting the dialogue taking place, my findings indicate there is a significant emergence of the frames of identification and crowdsourcing that coincide with the purpose outlined in the Facebook group “Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos”. The goal of this online social group was for the public to contribute images taken at the riot, as well as to write comments underneath the images with the purpose of aiding authorities to identify rioters. My

research indicates a positive correlation between the social media platform Facebook and using it as a communication tool for investigative procedures. The Facebook group demonstrates crowdsourcing as the public is engaging with the Facebook group actively and communicating information surrounding the riot to authorities, as well as other members of the public. The creation and utilization of this Facebook group demonstrates how social media can be a helpful tool when carrying out the purpose of the practice of communication between both the public and authorities. The public is the driving force behind the success of crowdsourcing and it is positively demonstrated in the case study of the Vancouver 2011 riots.

Social media and its value as a tool to the criminal justice system is a new area of research that has only recently been explored. Future research studying the effects of other communication platforms such as Twitter and the potential they hold in collecting evidence and communicating with the public would be an interesting area to explore. Understanding the interconnectivity of these platforms will help in drawing conclusions on a larger scale about the connections between social media and the criminal justice system. Facebook definitely has room to grow and a substantial amount of potential for being a successful tool in the future for aiding in investigative procedures, especially in a booming digital and technologically reliant society. Comparing the 1994 and 2011 riots clearly demonstrates the strides that have been made in communication technology and the development possible in the future.

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